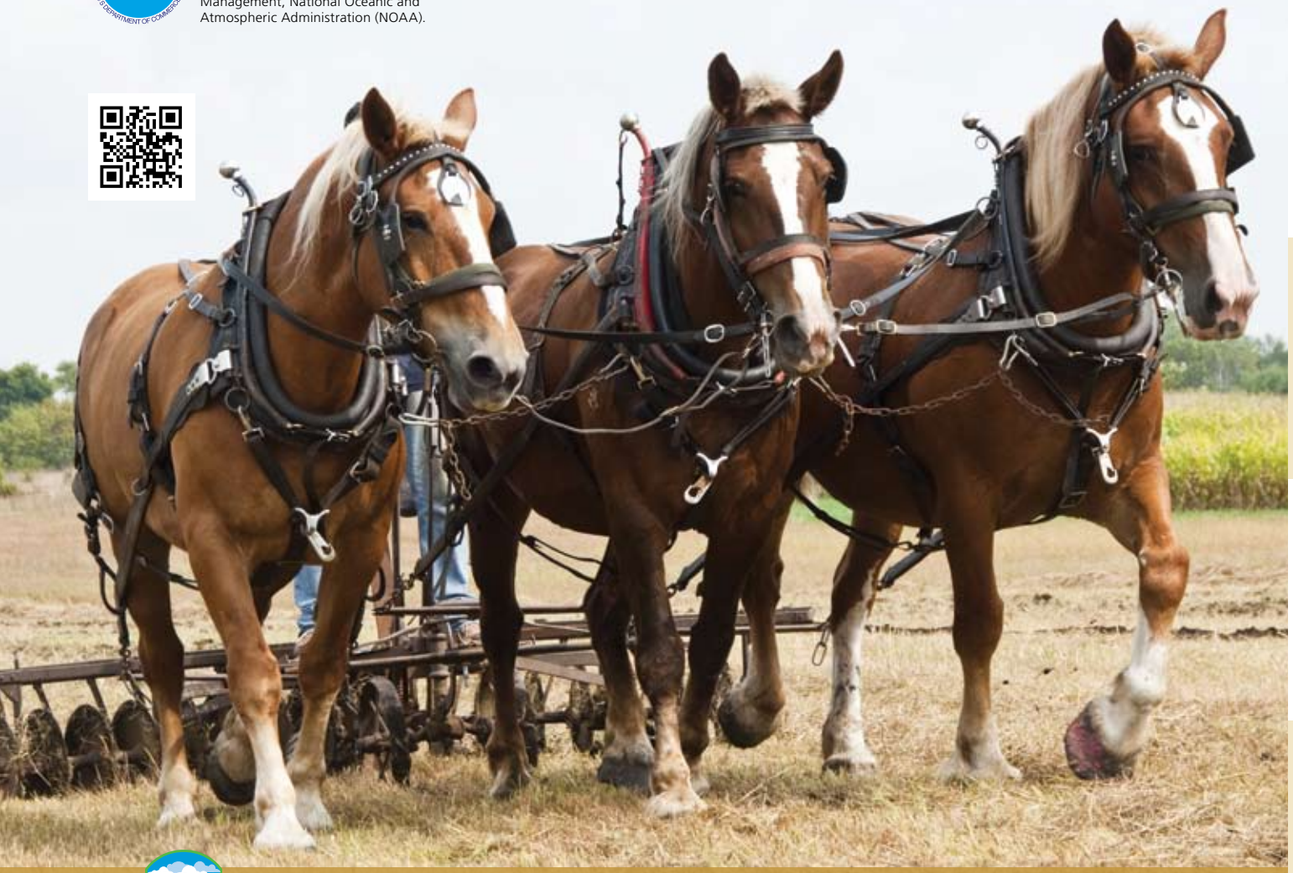
Maryland
Department of Agriculture
Office of Resource Conservation
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
410.841.5863
www.mda.maryland.gov

Financial assistance provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Pulling Together

FOR A CLEANER CHESAPEAKE BAY

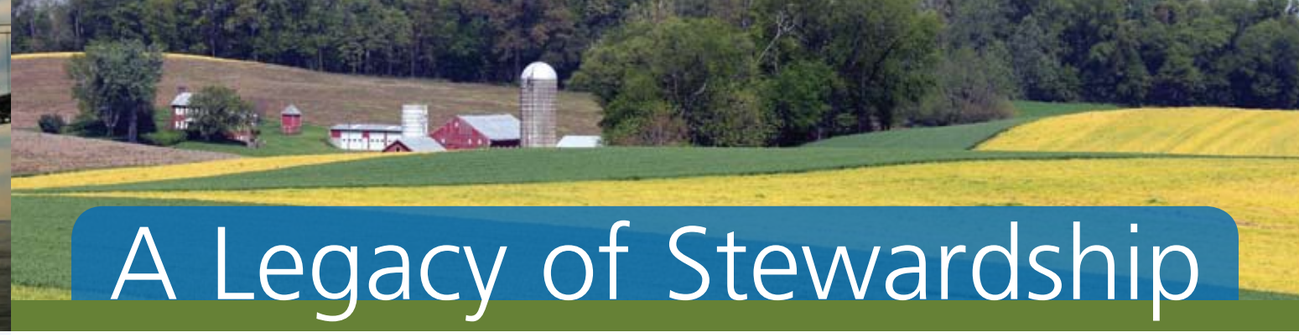


MARYLAND
Smart, Green & Growing

Martin O'Malley, *Governor*
Anthony G. Brown, *Lt. Governor*
Earl F. Hance, *Secretary*
Mary Ellen Setting, *Deputy Secretary*

The Maryland Department of Agriculture and Maryland Farmers

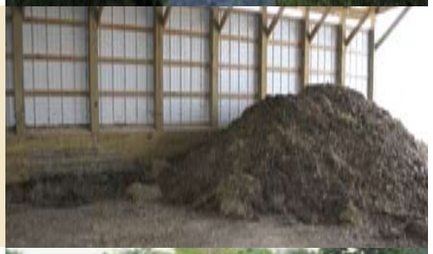
Recycled Paper MDA 15.14.12



A Legacy of Stewardship

Streamside buffers safeguard waterways from nutrients and sediment coming off the land.

Waste storage structures protect stored manure from rainwater runoff.



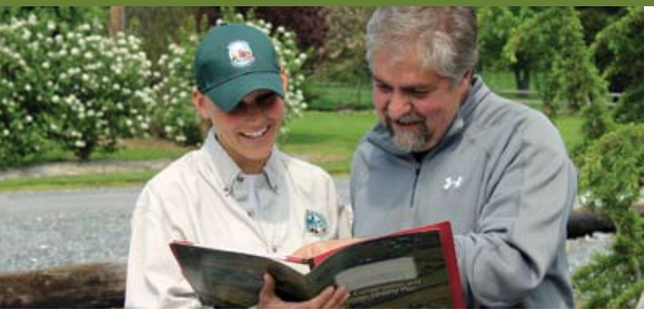
Livestock crossings protect streams from animal traffic.

Cover crops absorb excess nutrients and help prevent erosion.

During the last decade alone, Maryland farmers have installed thousands of conservation practices on their farms to protect natural resources and safeguard water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. This legacy of environmental stewardship dates back to the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s when Maryland farmers first began working with newly created soil conservation districts to protect the soil from the devastating effects of wind and water erosion.

Today, the Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Office of Resource Conservation—in partnership with soil conservation districts and a host of local, state and federal agencies—is pulling together with Maryland farmers to place even more conservation practices on farmland—practices that balance crop and livestock production with the need to protect natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay. Read on to learn more about our agricultural conservation programs.

Leading the way to a healthier Bay.



Agricultural Nutrient Management Program

Reducing the amount of nutrients entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries is a top priority for Maryland and other Bay states. Nutrients—primarily nitrogen and phosphorus—are key ingredients in fertilizer and animal waste. Since 2001, Maryland farmers have been required by state law to take soil tests and follow nutrient management plans when applying fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources to their crop fields. MDA's nutrient management specialists conduct on-farm audits and inspections to verify that these plans are working to protect waterways from the damaging effects of nutrient runoff.

To ensure the effectiveness of nutrient management plans, MDA oversees a certification and licensing program for consultants who develop these plans for farmers. A specialized training and certification program is also available for farmers who want to become certified to develop their own plans. Continuing education workshops update consultants and farmers on the latest developments and technology in nutrient management.

Conservation Grants

Protecting natural resources on farms can be costly. MDA provides farmers with grants that cover up to 87.5 percent of the costs to install best management practices (BMPs) on farms to prevent soil erosion, manage nutrients and safeguard water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Cover crops planted after the summer harvest to absorb residual fertilizers, streamside buffers of grasses and trees planted to protect waterways from sedimentation and farm runoff, and animal waste management systems constructed to help farmers safely handle and store manure resources are among more than 30 BMPs eligible for grants through the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program.

Field Staff

Farmers rely on the technical expertise of highly trained MDA field specialists working in Maryland's 24 local soil conservation districts to select the right BMPs for their operations, supervise their installation or construction and develop maintenance plans to keep them in good working order. MDA technical experts also help farmers enroll in conservation programs and comply with federal, state and local environmental laws.

Enforcement

MDA technical experts and local soil conservation districts work jointly with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to investigate complaints involving agricultural pollution. Typically these complaints involve concerns about odors, sediment runoff, manure management and livestock issues. This interagency team works with farmers to address resource concerns and establish a timeline to correct problems. If complaints are not addressed voluntarily, MDE has authority to take legal action against polluters.

Research and Technology

MDA actively seeks grants from federal, state and private organizations to develop and field test promising new farm management technologies that sustain and improve agricultural production and advance water quality and conservation of natural resources. Many of these projects are watershed-based and designed to demonstrate new management strategies to reduce nutrient and sediment loads to Maryland waterways.

Education

Educating farmers, citizens, and young people about the importance of conserving natural resources is a major function of MDA's field staff. Field days, farm tours, pasture walks and workshops are held regularly to keep farmers abreast of the latest research findings, environmental regulations and technologies. MDA field staff also make classroom presentations, organize soil judging contests and serve as mentors to students participating in the Envirothon program, an outdoor natural resources competition for high school students who are interested in Maryland's environment.

Chesapeake Bay Partner

In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency placed the Chesapeake Bay on a "pollution diet" by establishing limits on the amount of nutrients and sediments entering its waters. These pollution thresholds, called the Total Maximum Daily Load, represent the maximum amount of pollution that the Bay can accept and still meet water quality standards. The six Bay states and the District of Columbia are required to follow approved Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) outlining specific actions and strategies they will take to achieve these pollution limits by 2025. MDA and soil conservation districts are working with farmers to implement the agricultural component of Maryland's WIP.